

Florin Japanese-American Citizens League
Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

WILLIAM "BILL" MATSUMOTO

February 27, 1996 and March 14, 1996
1320 San Augustine Way
Sacramento, CA 95831

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JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer

Charles "Chuck" Kobayashi, long time friend and co-member of Sacramento JACL for years.

Interview Time and Place

Interviews occurred at the home of Chuck Kobayashi on February 27, 1996 and March 14, 1996. Couple of preparatory meetings preceded the interviews.

Transcribing

Linda Peace, Sacramento Superior and Municipal Court clerk who occasionally works for Chuck (Sacramento Superior Court Judge), did the entire transcribing as a service contribution to the community.

Editing and Typing of Preface

Chuck and Dorie Kobayashi

Photography

All photographs were provided by Bill Matsumoto and reproduced by Dan Inouye, a member of the Florin Japanese-American Citizens League.

Tapes and Interview Records

Copies of the bound transcript and tape will be kept by the Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the California State University, Sacramento Archives, located at 6000 Jay Street, Sacramento, CA 95819.

WILLIAM "BILL" MATSUMOTO

WILLIAM "BILL" MATSUMOTO, born on March 28, 1918, was the middle child of six boys and three girls, his parents having immigrated from Hiroshima. Like many other Isseis, his father came to the United States to escape the poverty in Japan, and eventually found his way to Newcastle, California, where he operated a grocery store. The family then moved to Sacramento near the area where Cal Expo is now located, and about ten years later moved on to Elk Grove, where they sharecropped strawberries primarily, but also farmed other crops.

In Elk Grove Bill attended Pleasant Grove School which still remains on its original site from over 130 years ago. He then went on to Elk Grove High School, which the Niseis from Florin and Elk Grove attended. Although Bill played various high school sports, it was his four years of public speaking classes and participation as a cheer leader that set the foundation for his future. But Bill clearly remembers those depression era tough times when food was not plentiful and a great deal of bartering went on to take care of the family needs.

After graduation Bill went into the produce business and in 1938 opened his own retail "produce stand" in West Sacramento on the old Davis Highway to San Francisco. The "stand" eventually became a general merchandise store. Incidentally, the entire structure was built by Bill and his brothers. It was during this time that Bill became a member of the Sacramento JACL although he was not an active member because he was busily involved in running his business on a daily basis.

Then in 1940 Bill met May Kumasaki and a year and a half later the two were married in November 1941, just a month before the outbreak of World War II. They had two daughters, one of whom married and had a daughter, who in turn had a child (who would be Bill's great-granddaughter.)

With the war, Bill sold his store and he and his family were evacuated to Walerga and then to Tule Lake. At both Walerga and Tule Lake, Bill was appointed as the Mess Division Manager, being responsible for the food acquisition and distribution at both camps. After the "yes/yes - no/no" decision, Bill moved to Amache, Colorado, which was a low security camp, and departed back to the "free world" in 1944. Afterwards he spent time at different locations and returned to Sacramento in late 1945. He first farmed tomatoes on a sharecropping basis for one year, next worked for a short time at the U.S. Army Signal Depot and then became a warehouseman with General Produce until 1951, when he was involved in a serious accident at work. However, during his years at General Produce, he had met a number of people and started working as a life insurance agent on a part time basis. That accident turned Bill's career around entirely and he started his forty plus year career (just ended) as a life insurance agent for West Coast Life Insurance. Bill attributes a great deal of his success to his involvement in the JACL, both on the local and national levels.

Bill was always active in the community - National JACL 1000 Club Chairperson for six years, National JACL Third Vice-President, one of the original participants and continuing volunteer for the Buddhist Church Bazaar, Chair of various committees for many years of the Sacramento Community (aka JACL) picnic, stalwart of the Hiroshima Kenjin Kai, and so on.

Although Bill has retired, he is just as busy as always in his collateral activities such as his travel group venture, Hiroshima Kenjin Kai, Master of Ceremonies of many functions, golfing, spending time with his great granddaughter, etc. He says he truly misses his wife, who died in 1987 and wished that she were still here to be able to share the glories of retirement.

[First Session, February 27, 1996]

[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

KOBAYASHI: It is approximately 6:45 P.M. at the residence of Charles (Chuck) Kobayashi, who will do the oral interview of William M. (Bill) Matsumoto, who is a long time resident of this area, and who has a wealth of knowledge and information dealing with the activities of Japanese Americans in this area, both before and after World War II. We will now start the oral interview.

KOBAYASHI: Bill, where were you born?

MATSUMOTO: I was born in Newcastle, California.

KOBAYASHI: And what was your date of birth?

MATSUMOTO: March 28, 1918.

KOBAYASHI: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

MATSUMOTO: I initially had six brothers and two sisters.

KOBAYASHI: How do you fit into the order of the children?
Are you the oldest, the youngest?

MATSUMOTO: I'm about the fifth one, age wise.

KOBAYASHI: How many sisters did you have?

MATSUMOTO: I had one, two, three.

KOBAYASHI: And how many brothers do you have?

MATSUMOTO: Five. We lost one.

KOBAYASHI: So you were nine children all together.

MATSUMOTO: Nine children all together, yes.

KOBAYASHI: And the one you lost was a brother or sister?

MATSUMOTO: A sister.

KOBAYASHI: A sister, okay.

MATSUMOTO: She was nine years old.

KOBAYASHI: She was nine years old when she passed away.

MATSUMOTO: She would be the oldest girl in the family.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Okay. And what about your father?
Where did he come from originally?

MATSUMOTO: He came from Hiroshima.

KOBAYASHI: Do you know approximately when he came to this
country?

MATSUMOTO: I think he came when he was twenty one years
old.

KOBAYASHI: And do you know why he came to this country?

MATSUMOTO: Well, he always told me that they said that they
could make a wealth of money -- you know, lots
of money -- building railroads here around this
area.

KOBAYASHI: Do you know who told them that, or where he got
that information?

MATSUMOTO: No, I don't know where he got that information. I forget where he said he got it, but he said there was a lot of Hiroshima around here; he preferred Hiroshima.

KOBAYASHI: They all came from Japan --

MATSUMOTO: They all came from Japan.

KOBAYASHI: -- thinking that they were going to make a lot of money in the railroads?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. And what did your father do in Japan before he came over here?

MATSUMOTO: I never did ask him exactly what he did, but you know, they raised rice, so many paddies of rice.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Well, what about your mother? Where did she come from?

MATSUMOTO: She also came from Hiroshima too.

KOBAYASHI: And when did she come to this country?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I forget exactly. Wait a minute, now, wait a minute -- eighty six years ago.

KOBAYASHI: When she came to this country, was she already married to your father at that time?

MATSUMOTO: No. They got married later.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. So you said your father came here in 1910?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I would say so.

KOBAYASHI: And your mother came before or after that?

MATSUMOTO: She came after.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, she came after. What did your mother do in this country?

MATSUMOTO: Just worked, like we did.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Do you know what kind of work?

MATSUMOTO: It was a family situation.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, she worked with the family.

MATSUMOTO: We all worked together. See, we used to raise strawberries, plums, grapes and lettuce on the off season.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, this was in Newcastle?

MATSUMOTO: No, after we moved to Elk Grove.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, but what about when your parents first came to this country? Do you know where they worked?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. My father went into business. We called it the Hiroshimaya -- it was a grocery store.

KOBAYASHI: And where was this?

MATSUMOTO: In Newcastle, California.

KOBAYASHI: And what about your mother? Where was she at this time?

MATSUMOTO: Well, she was with us, you know. We all lived together.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, they were already married at this time?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. When they came to Newcastle.

KOBAYASHI: Where did your father come before he came to Newcastle?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, he was in Tacoma for quite a while -- you know, in Washington.

KOBAYASHI: Was he working the railroad up there?

MATSUMOTO: The railroad.

KOBAYASHI: Then he came to California?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: And was this then a general grocery store?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it was a general grocery store.

KOBAYASHI: Now, you said you were born in 1918?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And you were fifth in line, is that correct?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: So then your father and mother had a child almost every year since the time they were married?

MATSUMOTO: And twins! We had one set of twins.

KOBAYASHI: You had a twin brother yourself?

MATSUMOTO: No, not me, but we had twins in that family.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Now after you were born, do you recall your early days going to school?

MATSUMOTO: Not in Newcastle. We moved. You see, when we had that accident, and it was 1919 --

KOBAYASHI: What accident are you talking about?

MATSUMOTO: -- Well, if you know the town of Newcastle, there was a steep grade that goes up there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, yes. Newcastle is on top of a hill.

MATSUMOTO: Right, right. Well, we were coming down that slope one day, and my sister, who was about nine years old then, she held me in her lap. My father hit that abutment coming down.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you were an infant at this time?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I was about one year old.

KOBAYASHI: He hit the abutment which threw my sister out. As you recall, in those days, those trucks never had doors on them. They just had a little wall-like thing. So they threw us over that when he hit that abutment, and evidently she must have thrown me, because I was on the other side of the abutment and she fell under the wheel and was killed.

KOBAYASHI: So, at that time, your sister was around nine years old, and you were about one year old, and

what happened after that? You said your father quit farming?

MATSUMOTO: No, no. We had the --

KOBAYASHI: You had the Hiroshimaya store?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. So we moved out of there about a year after that.

KOBAYASHI: I see.

MATSUMOTO: And we moved to Sacramento. You know where the Cal Expo is.

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: You know where the race track is?

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: Well, we raised potatoes there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. And how long did you stay there?

MATSUMOTO: We stayed there until '26, I think, 1926.

KOBAYASHI: So you were one year old, so that would have been about 1919 or 1920, and then you moved to Sacramento --

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: -- so you would be about five or six years old at that time?

MATSUMOTO: That's right. I was going to kindergarten at the Arden School on Arden Way.

KOBAYASHI: And how long did you go there?

MATSUMOTO: I don't think it was too long -- maybe half a year or so, then we moved to Elk Grove.

KOBAYASHI: What part of Elk Grove did you move to?

MATSUMOTO: I lived, let's see -- today, they call it Data Road, and then Sheldon-Elk Grove Road, in that vicinity there, right close to it.

KOBAYASHI: And did you buy some property, or did you lease some property, or --

MATSUMOTO: We leased the property.

KOBAYASHI: Was there a reason for leasing the property rather than buying the property?

MATSUMOTO: Well, in those days, sharecropping was very popular, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, yes. And your father was from Japan, and your mother too, so they were not citizens -- in fact, they were not eligible for citizenship--

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: -- so they could not own any property either.

MATSUMOTO: Right, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So your family then went into growing various kinds of produce, or...?

MATSUMOTO: No, mostly strawberries.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, mostly strawberries.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, that was their main crop.

KOBAYASHI: Do you remember working out in the fields in those days?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, do I!

KOBAYASHI: What kind of work did you do out there?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I did -- see, I was going to school in those days, see, and so I didn't get a chance to go out in the field too much, but I made the boxes that we shipped the strawberries in and stuff, you know, and I used to get up around four o'clock in the morning and make those boxes so they would have enough boxes to fill during the day.

KOBAYASHI: And this was even while you were going to school?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: That was your general routine each day?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: This is, we're talking about 1926-27?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: And how many crops of strawberries did you raise a year? Do you recall?

MATSUMOTO: No. It's only one season. It starts about the middle of April and then we would fold up around August when it got real hot.

KOBAYASHI: And then what would you do the rest of the year?

MATSUMOTO: Well, then we went looking for work.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, your family went looking for work in the fall and in the winter season?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah. About five miles from where we lived, we had a -- oh, they called it the California Vineyards, and it was a big spread of grapes, so we would work on the grapes there.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, so this is after your strawberry season ended, and you would go out and not sharecrop, but you --

MATSUMOTO: No, no, no.

KOBAYASHI: -- but you would just act as a laborer --

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: -- on the grape farms.

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: And did your brothers and sisters do this also?

MATSUMOTO: We all went to work together. Uh, huh.

KOBAYASHI: Every day, practically, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yea! Except for one of my sisters stayed home, but outside of that --

KOBAYASHI: Well, what about going to school? How did you manage that?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we went to school during the school year, I attended school.

KOBAYASHI: So during the school year, you didn't have to work during the days?

MATSUMOTO: No, no. But see, we made it a point that our family, whoever was able, we took a week off in May, which was in the middle of the strawberry season, that's the peak season, and they needed all our help -- well, we took a week off of school and did that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, all the kids in the family, and--

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: -- and you used to work every day out in the field during that time? Do you think that affected your schooling at all?

MATSUMOTO: Ah-h-h, I guess it would affect it in some way, but it's toward the end of the school year, and our school used to end about the first or second of June, you see, so it was pretty near over, and you know, all the tests were taken, and you know...

KOBAYASHI: I see. Now, do you recall your first school in Elk Grove?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: What was that? A grammar school, or --

MATSUMOTO: Well, yeah. The grammar school I went to was right in back of our ranch. There was a school there, and they called it Pleasant Grove School.

KOBAYASHI: So how long did you go to that school?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I think I graduated from there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so your younger brothers and sisters then went to this Pleasant Grove School?

MATSUMOTO: That's right, that's where we went.

KOBAYASHI: And then, after you graduated from grammar school, was that a six year grammar school or an eight year grammar school?

MATSUMOTO: Eight, I think it was eight.

KOBAYASHI: Eight years?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Then, from there you went to where?

MATSUMOTO: High school.

KOBAYASHI: Elk Grove High School?

MATSUMOTO: Elk Grove High School.

KOBAYASHI: Is it the same location where it is today?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, it was not.

MATSUMOTO: No, no. That building is still there, but the high school moved down towards the park over

there, if you know where that is -- Elk Grove Park --

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: -- where they had that, where they used to have our picnics?

KOBAYASHI: Yes. Oh, I see. So then your whole family, all your brothers and sisters, all went to Elk Grove High School?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: What did you study when you were going to Elk Grove High School, do you recall?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I know I took typing, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Were you thinking about going to college at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Uh, no -- I didn't have any intentions.

KOBAYASHI: Why is that?

MATSUMOTO: I don't know (softly).

KOBAYASHI: Well, do you recall whether or not a lot of Japanese were in those days were emphasizing college, or do you recall?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, my dad kept on telling me, keep going to school, you know, but I don't know... (voice trails).

KOBAYASHI: So while you were in high school, you recall taking typing, and uh, what else did you take?

MATSUMOTO: Public speaking, and things like that.

KOBAYASHI: The public speaking became very useful, didn't it?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I don't know about that?

KOBAYASHI: Why? You're a very outgoing type of person!

MATSUMOTO: Well, I enjoyed it. Let's put it that way.

KOBAYASHI: Do you know how many years you took public speaking?

MATSUMOTO: I took public speaking for three years.

KOBAYASHI: Three years.

MATSUMOTO: Uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: That was kind of unusual for people of Japanese ancestry to be taking public speaking, wasn't it?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I guess, but I liked it. I liked to speak in front of people.

KOBAYASHI: Were there other Japanese Americans taking public speaking at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Hey, I don't recall anybody. You know, when you first brought it up, I thought, gee - you know, who was in that - there were a couple of girls in there -

KOBAYASHI: But you don't recall any Japanese American males taking public speaking?

MATSUMOTO: No, no -- I don't recall.

KOBAYASHI: Well, in those days, most of the boys were taking college type of preparation course, and you were kind of a little bit different --

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: -- from the rest, as far as that was concerned.

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: What kind of other activities did you do in high school?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I played all the sports, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Which sports are these?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I believe basket, not basketball, but I played, well I did play basketball, but I wasn't too good at it. I wrestled a lot, because that was popular in those days, you know. And I played football and baseball, too.

KOBAYASHI: All four years of high school?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I played four years.

KOBAYASHI: You must have gotten letters in all the sports?

MATSUMOTO: Nay, no -- I wasn't that good.

KOBAYASHI: But what about in football?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, football I did pretty good.

KOBAYASHI: You received letters in football?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, you know, with the great big "E.G." on it.

KOBAYASHI: What color were your school colors?

MATSUMOTO: Blue and gold.

KOBAYASHI: Are they still the same colors?

MATSUMOTO: Gee, I, I really don't know.

KOBAYASHI: Do you still have those "E.G." --

MATSUMOTO: No, I threw them away.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you did.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, when I went to camp, you see, we stored them away where all the moths got in them and chewed through that.

KOBAYASHI: Now, did you also do any other activities while you were in high school, other than sports?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, would judo and kendo and that stuff come in?

KOBAYASHI: You did judo and kendo?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I did that for awhile.

KOBAYASHI: What about any other activities directly in high school like, maybe cheerleading, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I was cheerleading in high school for four years, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you did.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, with two or three other people.

KOBAYASHI: Were there other Japanese Americans also doing that?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, there was one fella, and I liked the way that he did it, and that's how I go into it. He was a senior, and his name was Jack Takahashi.

KOBAYASHI: Have you kept touch with him at all, or --

MATSUMOTO: I know he lives in Lodi, and I see him every once in awhile.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, he's still living there?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, he's still living. He's a little bit older than I am, but...

KOBAYASHI: Now, did you run for any class offices while you were in high school?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, see, cheerleader was one of the units. I never did run for any office.

KOBAYASHI: Did you ever think about doing something like that while you were in high school?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I thought it would be good, but I never really got into it, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Now, you were saying that while you were going to high school, you did some judo and kendo.

MATSUMOTO: Yes, we did it on the off day.

KOBAYASHI: So, this was through your church, or how did --

MATSUMOTO: Well, we paid the tuition, you know, so much a month.

KOBAYASHI: And where were the classes for judo and kendo?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we had the Elk Grove Japanese School -- it was a big, pretty good size building, and we used to practice there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you mean the Japanese in Elk Grove put together a building for school itself?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, we built the school.

KOBAYASHI: And this was for teaching Japanese?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. For Japanese language, yes.

KOBAYASHI: Did you go to Japanese school?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: How many years did you go?

MATSUMOTO: I think I went about six.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! You went six years!

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: So you were pretty proficient by the time you got out of there, then?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I wish I was more interested in it. You know, after going to American school for five days and then to have to go to Saturday school for another six hours, it gets pretty old.

KOBAYASHI: Did most of your classmates go to the Japanese school at that time?

MATSUMOTO: I would say so.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so virtually everybody did. So, who supported the Japanese school?

MATSUMOTO: We paid.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you paid tuition.

MATSUMOTO: Everybody paid the tuition.

KOBAYASHI: Do you know who built the Japanese school in Elk Grove?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. We had a guy build it for us. There's a builder in Elk Grove and he built it for us.

KOBAYASHI: A Caucasian builder built it?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: And everybody paid monthly dues to keep it going?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: So this was a pretty large structure, you said.

MATSUMOTO: Yes, it was pretty big. I remember in those days, my dad used to pay four dollars apiece, for every Saturday that we went, and five of us used to go.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so that cost your family twenty dollars each week, then, for the judo and, oh the Japanese school.

MATSUMOTO: Now, the judo and kendo, they didn't charge us. We had to pay the teachers, but we never had to pay for the rental of the building.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So did they have other Japanese cultural events at this Japanese school besides judo and kendo?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah. We had classes.

KOBAYASHI: Did they have Nihon Odori, that type of class?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. They had that, uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: Were the classes used more for young people, or for adults also?

MATSUMOTO: Well --

KOBAYASHI: Do you recall?

MATSUMOTO: -- uh, you know, we try to keep as much of the Japanese culture as possible, you know. I mean, we're still doing it.

KOBAYASHI: Yes, but in those days it was more pronounced?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it was more pronounced. You see, we saw all of the movies that didn't have no talking, no color, and the person that runs the movie situation would come and be the narrator.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: So, as the movie showed, this fella, whoever it was, would narrate what the story was about and he would play the part of the woman, the man, and you know, the conversation and all that.

KOBAYASHI: And would he speak in Japanese or English?

MATSUMOTO: Japanese.

KOBAYASHI: And were the films from Japan?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, from Japan.

KOBAYASHI: Did you go to these movies often?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, but I didn't watch them too much.

KOBAYASHI: Well, what did you do while you were there?

MATSUMOTO: Looked at the girls.

KOBAYASHI: Did they have these movies almost every weekend?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: They did it mostly in the summer time. We had to have the weather.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! This was outdoors?

MATSUMOTO: Outdoors.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and where did they do this?

MATSUMOTO: Well, at the Elk Grove Japanese School, there was a big lot there, you know. They built it

that way so that we would have the room for the movies. And they showed the movies outdoors.

KOBAYASHI: And you had the screen outdoors and so on?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: But in the summer time, the movies couldn't start until after nine o'clock, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it was late. It was.

KOBAYASHI: And they had these how often in the summer time?

MATSUMOTO: Maybe two or three times. Those were a fund raiser more than anything else.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, was this one of those situations where the person, whoever was running it, would put a big board on the wall and put the names of each person and how much the person contributed?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: They did that in those days. You recall that.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: But the fund raising was for the Japanese school, and the --

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Now, do you know if there were any objections by the Caucasians for having movies like this outside?

MATSUMOTO: No, no - there was none.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when you were going to like Elk Grove, or the Pleasant Grove School, were there any non-Nihonjins going there?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: How about other than Hakujin and Nihonjins?

MATSUMOTO: Well, outside of that, we had a few Indians, because there was a reservation just on the other side of the Cosumnes River.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: You, know.

KOBAYASHI: Do you remember the name of the tribe?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, gee, the tribe?

KOBAYASHI: Well, other than that, then, there were Indians, some Japanese, and Caucasians?

MATSUMOTO: And some Mexicans.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and some Mexicans.

MATSUMOTO: Yes. There were quite a few Mexicans.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and were the Mexicans primarily laborers on the farms?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: They were not sharecropping, though, like the Japanese?

MATSUMOTO: No, no. They worked on their own.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Okay. Now, when you were saying your family was sharecropping on the strawberries, did you hire other, for example, Hispanic people to do some of the work?

MATSUMOTO: No, we used mainly used Filipino people.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, Filipinos!

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they were the best.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, there were a lot of Filipinos in that area, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: Where did they live?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, we had bunk houses for them, you know. And they were seasonal, so they would move from here when the strawberries were over, and they would go pick peaches, and so on.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so just like we have the migrant Hispanic workers today, in those days you had the migrant Filipino workers. But the Japanese were not really migrant workers, but they were --

MATSUMOTO: No. You know, like strawberries -- I don't know if you understand the raising of strawberries, but it's a three hundred and sixty five day job.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, it is?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. You know, there's different times of the year when the suckers come out, and then we have to replant, and all of that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, when you said that your season was from April to August, you --

MATSUMOTO: Well, that's the productive season.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, that's the productive season. Oh, but you have the other caretaking season --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right. You have to get ready for the following year.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So it's a whole year job, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it's three hundred and sixty five days.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so this is why basically the Japanese were running the farms as sharecroppers and they would also hire other --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, we had to hire --

KOBAYASHI: In order to do the picking. I was just wondering. I didn't think --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, see, the strawberries would come out in about ten days. In about ten days, the whole thing comes out, the bulk of it --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So what about the rest of the summer, the other time?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we had plums, grapes, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so that's what you were doing during the summer time, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right, uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: Did you ever experience a year, do you recall, when for example, the strawberries were affected by the weather or something?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, there were years that were terrible, you know -- and it was rough.

KOBAYASHI: So the family did suffer in those years?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when you went to Elk Grove High School, what was the school population like as far as race was concerned?

MATSUMOTO: You know, I don't --

KOBAYASHI: Were there any black families?

MATSUMOTO: There were no black people.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, is that right? In Elk Grove?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. There was about three or four Hispanics, and then we had, oh I would say forty or fifty Japanese, and the rest were white.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when you were going there, did you associate with Caucasians at all as a high school student, or was your association mostly with other Japanese Americans?

MATSUMOTO: No, I was pretty -- because I was raised in a mixed deal, you know -- and I didn't know. Well, the Florin guys, of course, they talked Japanese, and we always talked to them, but not that you could go around with them.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when you say "Florin guys", were Japanese Americans from Florin also going to Elk Grove High School?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: And those guys were at segregated schools until they came to high school, see.

KOBAYASHI: So they were speaking more Japanese than --

MATSUMOTO: There was a lot of Japanese spoken, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: At high school?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: You mean between the kids when they were --

MATSUMOTO: Well, you see, evidently when they went to the segregated schools, I think the language they used was predominantly Japanese, you know, because they were all Japanese guys.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see, because it was easier to use their native language. So then when you were going to Elk Grove High School, did you notice any kind

of anti-Japanese activities or feelings among some students?

MATSUMOTO: Uh -- very little.

KOBAYASHI: Did you ever get into fights with students about racial issues?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, because I didn't like the way they talked about the Japanese being Japs and all of that.

KOBAYASHI: So some of that did go on at the high school?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Would you say there was quite a bit of that going on, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, there was quite a bit of that.

KOBAYASHI: But you, yourself, was not affected too much by that?

MATSUMOTO: No, they didn't bother me.

KOBAYASHI: And that's because you were doing a lot of the public speaking where a lot of Caucasians were involved?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: And you were also in the cheerleading squad, which was primarily Caucasian?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: So you had a lot of Caucasian friends while you were in high school?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: In Elk Grove High School.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And you also had a lot of Japanese American friends too?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: But in your experience, you noticed that there was a distinct difference in the relationship of the Japanese Americans from Florin with the Elk Grove students and others like yourself?

MATSUMOTO: Well, there was a difference.

KOBAYASHI: There was a difference.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. There was a definite difference.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, now did you, while you were going through high school like that, did you tend to hang around more with the brown people, or the Caucasian people, or just your own group of friends?

MATSUMOTO: Well, you know, when I was going to high school, I got along pretty well with everybody. You know, I didn't have any enemies or, you know.

KOBAYASHI: What about your brothers and sisters? How did they do as far as --

MATSUMOTO: Uh -- see, I never got to go to school with them.

KOBAYASHI: Well, why was that?

MATSUMOTO: Because, see like my sister, she went to as far as sophomore, and she had a problem with her eyes. In those days, you didn't have the modern techniques, and --

KOBAYASHI: And this was your older sister?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, my older sister -- the one who just passed away. And the only one I went to school with was my younger brother, my youngest brother, and then the sister that just passed away.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, now your older sister who had the eye problem -- she just dropped out of school?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. She had to quit school.

KOBAYASHI: Because she couldn't see?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. It was bothering her, so --

KOBAYASHI: So what did she do then after she quit school?

MATSUMOTO: Well, she stayed home and helped, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, because there was no other medical assistance available for her?

MATSUMOTO: We only had one doctor in there, and you know, he was a G.P., so, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So then did this older sister of yours ever finish high school eventually?

MATSUMOTO: No, she never did.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, she never did. Oh, but you finished high school?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now when did you graduate?

MATSUMOTO: '36.

KOBAYASHI: And what did you do after graduating high school?

MATSUMOTO: Well, the first day after I quit, I went into the retail produce business.

KOBAYASHI: You mean, not quit -- the day after you graduated.

MATSUMOTO: The day after I graduated. The next day I went to the bakery, and I worked in the bakery.

KOBAYASHI: Now, before we go any further, this was during the time of the depression, is that right?

MATSUMOTO: Right!

KOBAYASHI: Like 1929, --

MATSUMOTO: '28 and '29 --

KOBAYASHI: -- and '30, '31, '32 -- this is during the depression that you were going to high school,

and you were spending your summers working on the farm and so on. Do you recall those days?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. I used to work first, I would work in the hops, you know hops, that was a big area for hops. Every time that we got time off, like you know, two weeks, three weeks, I would go to work out there.

KOBAYASHI: Well, I guess your brothers and sisters also --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, we all did it.

KOBAYASHI: -- because the times were really tough in those days.

MATSUMOTO: And like I told you earlier, about them going to the California Vineyards and pruning and picking during the season, and then afterwards. By the way, we used to make a dollar and a half a day for ten hours.

KOBAYASHI: So that's fifteen cents an hour.

MATSUMOTO: Fifteen cents, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And you did this during your days off with your brothers and sisters while they --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah. Well, the girls didn't do it too much, but all the brothers did.

KOBAYASHI: What do you recall about the depression days before you graduated from high school?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, it was rough. First of all, you know, like bread was three loaves for twenty five cents, but we didn't have anything to put in the bread. You know, like today you would have bologna or ham or something like that?

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: Well, we had none of that. I remember many days that, you know what a rice ball is?

KOBAYASHI: Yes, yes.

MATSUMOTO: Well, my mother would package those and give us that for lunch when we were in high school?

KOBAYASHI: With nothing inside, you mean?

[End Tape 1, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

KOBAYASHI: Bill, you were just saying that times were very tough, and you recalled when you were going to high school, very meager lunches and so on. What about food at home? I mean, were food conditions sometimes very hard at home also -- for dinners, or breakfasts, and so on?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I would say yes, that we, I mean we never did have a variety of stuff to eat. It was almost always the same things.

KOBAYASHI: Would you say that was true of most Nihonjins at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Oh yes.

KOBAYASHI: Because you all were doing the same type of work?

MATSUMOTO: Right, right. I often talk about my mother, you know, for eight of us to eat supper at night, she would take one pork chop and cut it all up, and that was all the meat that went into the so-called okazu that we ate.

KOBAYASHI: Now, at the dinner table, did you have, with eight children and two adults, did you have a huge dinner table?

MATSUMOTO: Right! It was like going to a party. You know?

KOBAYASHI: Each night.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, and we weren't... one of the things I recall, still remember, is that we were not to touch anything on the table until my dad sat down.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So lots of times you were hungry, and you wanted to eat, but you --

MATSUMOTO: You don't touch it! You don't touch anything.

KOBAYASHI: And what would happen if you did touch it?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, my dad would chew you out, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Do you recall your father being a disciplinarian, or was he fairly easy?

MATSUMOTO: No... he was firm, you know. There were the rules of the game, you know.

KOBAYASHI: So he had certain rules, and they were to be obeyed, is that it?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Do you remember any other rules, or --

MATSUMOTO: Well, you know, when I was growing up, I don't know why I began to hate cooked daikon, you know, which was easy to acquire in the country, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Yes, yes.

MATSUMOTO: And I remember a couple of times that my mother would cook daikon and tell us to go ahead and eat, you know, and I would tell my father, "You know, I can't eat that", and he would say, "You don't have to eat it -- just sleep".

KOBAYASHI: So, if you didn't eat it, you had to go to sleep?

MATSUMOTO: That was it.

KOBAYASHI: So this was the way you always ate, then, you always ate at the same time, and as family together.

MATSUMOTO: Right. And we waited for Dad to come and sit down.

KOBAYASHI: And do you recall this going on throughout the time that you were growing up in the family?

MATSUMOTO: Well, when I was young -- in my younger days, I recall that.

KOBAYASHI: And by the time you graduated from high school, your five older brothers and sisters, were they still living at home?

MATSUMOTO: No, uh -- my oldest brother had moved to Berkeley, and he went to work there, and my older brothers would work seasonal work, you know, go to Lodi when the grapes were coming, and, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Would they live at home and commute every day?

MATSUMOTO: No, no, no. They would move in. Like Lodi was pretty far, it was thirty miles, and so in those days thirty miles was a long ways.

KOBAYASHI: So then, during those times, did you have any vehicles in your family?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, we had a truck.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, a truck to take care of the whole family though?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: So then, that means like your brother who moved to Berkeley, did he go by bus, or how did he go down there?

MATSUMOTO: We used to go by train.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, by train! So, if he didn't come home by train, you wouldn't see him anymore then.

MATSUMOTO: Yes, more or less.

KOBAYASHI: Because you wouldn't be driving a truck for the whole family just to go visit the brother.

MATSUMOTO: No, no, no. I don't know if you recall this, but you know the train from Oakland Depot to Sacramento was one dollar round trip. So, you know, you can't afford to --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So your brother, if he wants to go to Berkeley, for example, would drive from Elk Grove to the Sacramento S.P. Depot, and from there go to Oakland. And then to go to San Francisco, you had to go by ferry or something?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, there was a ferry.

KOBAYASHI: Because the bridge was built only about that time, wasn't it.

MATSUMOTO: The bridge was opened in 1938.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, 1938. So, how big of a house did you have during this time?

MATSUMOTO: We built that house and that house is still standing. I just drove out there about a month ago.

KOBAYASHI: Who is living there now? Do you know?

MATSUMOTO: Some Hakujin people.

KOBAYASHI: Well, this must be a very large home then.

MATSUMOTO: No, there were -- let's see -- one, two, three, four, five, six -- we had six different rooms on both sides. Three on each side, and then we had a big tower like thing, straight.

KOBAYASHI: I see, and that's where you had the dining table and everything?

MATSUMOTO: No, no -- then we had a kitchen on the other side.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Now, when you say, "We built it", who built it?

MATSUMOTO: We all built it. You know, the people of the neighborhood.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you built it together, as a community project?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, well we asked people to help. We built it during the winter, you see.

KOBAYASHI: And when you say other people, you mean other Nihonjins?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, you know, people around the village.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Well, then -- did you do that for other people too?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. Whenever they did it, we had to help them.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So you had a lot of community kind of --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. It was a community type of thing. Yes.

KOBAYASHI: You know, the Japanese, even today, have this tradition of Koden where they help the deceased family by contributing monies, so even in those

olden days, in the tradition of the koden, you had this other kind of community get together to build a house.

MATSUMOTO: Like, for instance, we used to dye colored rice, and my dad would buy like two tons of rice, and we would go to the station, and bring it home and stack it up, and that's what we ate during the winter.

KOBAYASHI: So, like if you buy it at certain times of the season, it's cheaper, and --

MATSUMOTO: Right. And because we buy it by the car, too, that was cheaper.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: Yes. It was priced better.

KOBAYASHI: And was this true of other Nihonjin families too?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, most of the people around our group did it.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so they would always buy bulk at the beginning seasons, so --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. We'd buy so many ton and then we divide it.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when you say, "divide it", divide it how?

MATSUMOTO: Well, how many sacks to you want? See?

KOBAYASHI: Oh! So each family divides it between --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: -- oh, I see, and share in the cost that way.
It's like a co-op.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it was a co-op way, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And what about other ways? Were there any
community, were there Japanese groups to help
each other in times of need?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yea! You know, like we would raise a lot
of nappa and other vegetables, and stuff like
that, you know, and then we would divide it with
others, and they would give us something in
return, you know. You know, no money changes
hands, but --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the barter system.

MATSUMOTO: Barter system, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you had a lot of that?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. Sure.

KOBAYASHI: And that would be true for services too?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, going into this, right after you graduated
from high school, you said you went into the
produce business?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. My brother and another guy, Sambo -- he's gone now, and --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, which brother?

MATSUMOTO: My oldest brother. Yeah, they had a -- they bought a little fruit stand, maybe big as this house here.

KOBAYASHI: You mean our house?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, which is about two thousand square feet.

MATSUMOTO: Right. And then they had a place to wash their vegetables, and we specialized in vegetables -- that's all we sold.

KOBAYASHI: And where did this take place?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I really --

KOBAYASHI: In what town was this?

MATSUMOTO: In Berkeley -- by Lake Merritt there.

KOBAYASHI: That's Oakland.

MATSUMOTO: Oakland, yeah. Well, it was on the Berkeley side, by the Grand Theater if you know where that is.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I know where that is. Oh, okay. So that's where one, two, three of you got together and --

MATSUMOTO: No, I went to work for them. I worked for wages.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you worked for wages, and the other two ran it?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. The other two ran it.

KOBAYASHI: And what did you do as a produce person there?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, delivered. You know, daily, with the little truck, I used to deliver to the hills.

KOBAYASHI: And how long did you do this?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, well -- when I went to Berkeley, I had a plan that I was going to work three months here, and then I'll work there months here, and --

KOBAYASHI: When you say "here", what do you mean?

MATSUMOTO: Well, you know, I would work at that store for three months, and then I would move on to downtown Oakland, --

KOBAYASHI: To another store, you mean?

MATSUMOTO: -- yea, to another store, and then I'll work for Wilson Market which was a different type of a store, and --

KOBAYASHI: It had nothing to do with your brothers, then?

MATSUMOTO: No, no. And then I'd work downtown in Oakland.

KOBAYASHI: That was your plan.

MATSUMOTO: That was my plan. And that's the way I worked it. So every time I moved, I told those guys, "Hey -- I'll be here for three months".

KOBAYASHI: So, how long did you do this?

MATSUMOTO: I did it for about a year and a half.

KOBAYASHI: So, that would be around 1938 by then?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: So, what did you do after '38?

MATSUMOTO: I came home and opened a market here in Sacramento.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! You opened your own market.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: What street was that on?

MATSUMOTO: It was on the highway. That's why I called it the Davis Highway Market, because it was the road to San Francisco -- before the freeways.

KOBAYASHI: And where about in West Sacramento was this?

MATSUMOTO: Well, if you recall where Tiny's Motel was, in West Sacramento, you know as you go over the F Street Bridge?

KOBAYASHI: Right. It's not too far from Sacramento side?

MATSUMOTO: No, no -- it's only about a mile I'd guess. A fella by the name of Fukuda owned that store before, and it burned down, and the only thing he saved was the air cooling system, you know, because he was selling ice there -- chunks of ice.

KOBAYASHI: So when you say you started your market there, did you have someone build a building there, or what?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we did most of the work ourselves.

KOBAYASHI: When you say "we", who do you mean by we?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, like my dad and my brothers, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, they helped you build this --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: -- building for the market?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: And, did you depend primarily on the trade going from Sacramento to San Francisco, or...?

MATSUMOTO: Well, and people who lived around that area, see. There were quite a few, a lot of Mexican camps, see, because they were bringing Mexicans into work during the seasons.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, they were doing that even before the war?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yea!

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Well, what about the Filipinos that you had down in --

MATSUMOTO: Same thing.

KOBAYASHI: -- oh, you had Filipinos up there doing the same thing?

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: And they would be some of your customers in your store?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, was this a produce only store?

MATSUMOTO: No. I had anything.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, this was a regular grocery store?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. A regular grocery store.

KOBAYASHI: Now, where did you get the money to start all of this?

MATSUMOTO: I didn't have it. Because, as I remember, going back to the days when we started, we only had I think two hundred dollars cash, and then I bought the groceries from a downtown grocery -- gee, I forget that guy's name -- and I guess he had faith in me. He said, "Hey, whatever you want, you take it and you pay me as you go along", so I took advantage of that, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, so what about the cost of the building?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I spent seven hundred dollars to build that whole building, roof and all!

KOBAYASHI: And that was material cost, because the labor was free?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, the labor was free. See, we bought all second hand lumber -- nothing was new, you know.

KOBAYASHI: So you started this around 1938, and --
MATSUMOTO: February 4th!
KOBAYASHI: 1938.
MATSUMOTO: 1938 is when I opened.
KOBAYASHI: And then how long did you run this market?
MATSUMOTO: Until, let's see -- that was '41 when we were evacuated, huh?
KOBAYASHI: No, 1942.
MATSUMOTO: Yeah, but I sold it before the year turned.
KOBAYASHI: Now, you sold it after the war started or before the war started?
MATSUMOTO: After the war started.
KOBAYASHI: Okay.
MATSUMOTO: One month later I sold it.
KOBAYASHI: So between February, 1938 and the end of 1941, you just ran that market yourself then?
MATSUMOTO: Right -- well, at one time, I had seven guys working.
KOBAYASHI: As your employees?
MATSUMOTO: Yeah, employees.
KOBAYASHI: Did you enlarge the market?
MATSUMOTO: No.
KOBAYASHI: So the market still stayed the same in size.
MATSUMOTO: Well, it was open air, you see?

KOBAYASHI: Well, how about the weather? How about the rain and so on?

MATSUMOTO: Well, then we closed the door. We had a sliding door, like a garage, you see.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so you would open and close that every night?

MATSUMOTO: Yes, every night we closed.

KOBAYASHI: What were your normal hours you operated?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we opened about seven and then we closed about nine.

KOBAYASHI: And you did this on a daily basis?

MATSUMOTO: There you go.

KOBAYASHI: Did you take any vacations during that time?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I took a few, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And who would run it while you were gone?

MATSUMOTO: Well, see, like I had my brothers during the time when there was nothing going on at the farm, and I would ask them to come and help and they would come and help.

KOBAYASHI: So then, what kind of merchandise were you selling then?

MATSUMOTO: I had a general merchandise store. I sold meats, and --

KOBAYASHI: But not dry goods, then.

MATSUMOTO: No, but canned goods -- all kinds of canned goods -- and ice. Ice was my big money maker.

KOBAYASHI: And why was that?

MATSUMOTO: Because you buy it cheap and sell it high.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. In those days, ice was a very important --

MATSUMOTO: Right. We didn't have refrigerators then, you see -- well, I shouldn't say we didn't have, but very few of us had them.

KOBAYASHI: So most people were using ice box?

MATSUMOTO: Ice box.

KOBAYASHI: And they would need ice every day.

MATSUMOTO: Uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: Now, you also said you were selling canned goods and so on?

MATSUMOTO: Yes, and beer.

KOBAYASHI: Now, would you get these on credit, or would you have to pay for these on C.O.D.?

MATSUMOTO: Well, after I got started, the first day we opened we sold ten dollars and fourteen cents. I will never forget that -- all day.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Was that a good day?

MATSUMOTO: That was the first day.

KOBAYASHI: Yes, but was ten dollars and fourteen cents in one day a good day?

MATSUMOTO: No, no. That didn't even pay for the rice. But then, in about two weeks, I was selling more than two hundred dollars a day.

KOBAYASHI: Well, what accounted for the increase?

MATSUMOTO: Well, people liked the convenience, because they could pull up to the front of my store, and you know, just roll the window down and the lady would say, "Give me two heads of lettuce" and we would wrap them up and throw them in the car, take the money and away they would go.

KOBAYASHI: Now, this building and the property was owned by you?

MATSUMOTO: No, we were leasing the property.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! You were leasing the property.

MATSUMOTO: Yes, leasing the property.

KOBAYASHI: But the building was your building.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I built the building.

KOBAYASHI: Now, you also said you were selling beer. As I recall, you were born in 1918, and you weren't even twenty years old at this time?

MATSUMOTO: No. I didn't have a license -- my father had the license.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so your father got the liquor license, or beer and wine --

MATSUMOTO: Beer and wine. I sold wine, too, see?

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So then , you did this during this time, and did you sell only on cash, or credit, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, it's cash. I had a couple of customers that lived right by there, and I would give them credit, and I got stuck on --

KOBAYASHI: So, generally, your business was a cash and carry business.

MATSUMOTO: Right. And the one that screwed me the worst was the Japanese.

KOBAYASHI: Oh? And why do you say that?

MATSUMOTO: Because he stuck me for about four hundred dollars.

KOBAYASHI: Did you try to collect from this man?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, but he never come near my place --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, after that?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Does he still live in this area?

MATSUMOTO: Well --

KOBAYASHI: I don't want you to give us his name or anything, but --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, well, I think they're both dead now.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Now, after the business started, you said you mentioned you had seven people working for you?

MATSUMOTO: Right!

KOBAYASHI: So it became a pretty prosperous organization?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah! I had a good going business.

KOBAYASHI: Now, did you have to have any legal documents there at this time, or --

MATSUMOTO: There was no workman's comp, and stuff like that, you see.

KOBAYASHI: But what about leasing the property?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I leased the property.

KOBAYASHI: And did you have a written lease on that?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: Did you do that on your own, or did you get legal assistance?

MATSUMOTO: No, I think her dad did it.

KOBAYASHI: You mean Dorie's father, Mr. Tsukamoto, was the attorney that helped you on this?

MATSUMOTO: Yes, yes.

KOBAYASHI: Now, during this time, did you live in Sacramento or West Sacramento?

MATSUMOTO: I lived in Sacramento.

KOBAYASHI: Where in Sacramento did you live?

MATSUMOTO: I lived, you know where Fifth, T and U --

KOBAYASHI: Is that the general area where most of the Japanese were living?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they were all Japanese around there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, they were all Japanese. And, was this a time when it was difficult for Japanese to buy property, other than those areas?

MATSUMOTO: Not necessarily. If you had the money, you could buy anything, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when... during this time you were working, did you go out on dates or anything, or did --

MATSUMOTO: Well, I got married pretty quick, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. When did you get married?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I was married in 1941.

KOBAYASHI: Yes, but that was still three years after you opened the store.

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: What month in 1941 did you get married?

MATSUMOTO: Oh -- November 9th.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, shortly before the war started.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And her name was May?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And what was her maiden name?

MATSUMOTO: Kumasaki.

KOBAYASHI: Was she a Sacramentan?

MATSUMOTO: No -- a Fresno girl.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. How did you happen to meet her?

MATSUMOTO: She was working at the Tom's Coffee Shop on sixth and Capitol. They used to call it Main Coffee Shop.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: Where the Main Hotel was.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, yes -- right.

MATSUMOTO: Well, her brother-in-law ran the restaurant, you see. And she came to work in the summer every time.

KOBAYASHI: And that's where you met her.

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: And that's where you met her and started courting her?

MATSUMOTO: (Laughter.) Yes, more or less -- whatever!

KOBAYASHI: And you got married in November, 1941. Now, during this time between 1938 and 1941, after you graduated in 1936, were you aware of this, of any conflict, between the United States and Japan during this time?

MATSUMOTO: I was. I knew it was going on.

KOBAYASHI: Now, could you feel any discrimination? For example, regarding the business that you were running?

MATSUMOTO: No - I never had any. I never experienced any of that.

KOBAYASHI: What about in your relationship with any people during that time? Did you associate with anybody other than Japanese Americans at that time?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: So, basically, Japanese people were your customers, and --

MATSUMOTO: No -- Hakujins were my customers.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! Caucasians were mostly your customers.

MATSUMOTO: I only had Fujimotos, Moritas, Scott Yamamoto that I recall as regular customers.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So most of the others were all Caucasians.

MATSUMOTO: Passing by, you know.

KOBAYASHI: And the farm workers, you reported too.

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: Now, during the time after you graduated and started this business, did you become involved in any community activities?

MATSUMOTO: I belonged to the J.A.C.L.

KOBAYASHI: You were recruited into the J.A.C.L.?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yes. Her dad recruited me.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, Mr. Tsukamoto recruited you into it?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. There was only about, I think it only was about fifty cents a year.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! Those were the dues in those days.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yes. I wasn't able to vote, though. They wouldn't let me vote.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, because you were --

MATSUMOTO: Yes. Underage -- so I was an associate member.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, those are Asian requirements, or?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they had a rule in there. I think you had to be, I don't know, twenty or twenty one to vote --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: -- to belong and to be able to vote, you see.

KOBAYASHI: And, so do you recall some of those old timers who were members of the J.A.C.L. like Doc Kawahara and Dr. Muramoto?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. See, those guys were running the show. The two Muramotos, the dentist and the doctor -- M.D., and her dad and, let's see, Henry Taketa -- he was in there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! So you were familiar with all of those people, the --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yes. I knew those guys from way back.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Well, you didn't go to any of those conferences in those days.

MATSUMOTO: No, I didn't go to the conferences.

KOBAYASHI: You did go to those conferences later on?

MATSUMOTO: Later, after I became a national officer, I --

KOBAYASHI: And that was after the war, right?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: So you say you were married in 1941?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: What town did you get married in?

MATSUMOTO: Sacramento. At the Wakanoura, that's where the had the reception.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! They had the Wakanoura in those days too? Was it the same Wakanoura that we have today?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it's the same outfit, but they had a smaller place. It was on Perch Street.

KOBAYASHI: And the same type of food that they have today, right?

MATSUMOTO: Right. And the lady used to be the cook, and she was a good cook! It was delicious.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. So, then you had a regular wedding reception, and where did you go on your honeymoon?

MATSUMOTO: Los Angeles, and down that way.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: I had just bought a '40 Dodge, you know. It was a new car and it had hardly any miles on it.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so 1941, so you were about twenty four or twenty five years old?

MATSUMOTO: That's it.

KOBAYASHI: Now, between the time you graduated from high school and the time when you were doing all this, did you participate in any other, say, recreational activities?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. I played ball -- football --

KOBAYASHI: And baseball?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, baseball.

KOBAYASHI: Now, when you say football, you --

MATSUMOTO: I played for the Sacramento Taiku.

KOBAYASHI: Now, this was a Japanese semi-professional team, or what is this?

MATSUMOTO: No, it was just a town team.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, a town team. So you played people from --

MATSUMOTO: Stockton, Lodi, and you know, wherever.

KOBAYASHI: So these were all Nihonjins?

MATSUMOTO: They were all Nihonjins.

KOBAYASHI: And you played football in those days?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Do you recall some of the teammates from Sacramento in those days?

MATSUMOTO: Well, let's see. I was playing running guard and George Yamada was the center, and then Mark Miyao was the tackle on one side --

KOBAYASHI: Oh! He's a big guy.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. -- and John Oki was the end out there. Yulene was the backfield and Larry --

KOBAYASHI: Larry who?

MATSUMOTO: Larry Takai.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! Larry Takai played football?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah! He was good. He was fast.

KOBAYASHI: Did Larry have better eyesight in those days?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. He could see really good.

KOBAYASHI: Who was the quarterback?

MATSUMOTO: I think Skeet Oji was the quarterback most of the time.

KOBAYASHI: Well, that's interesting. So you had football between towns in those days --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: -- because I never even heard of anything like that.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. Boy! We used to get good crowds, too, you know?

KOBAYASHI: And you played during the football season, and you played baseball during other time --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, during the summer. And then even when I was in Berkeley, those guys at Elk Grove would pay my way, and then my brothers would come after me, you see.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so you still played for the Sacramento team, and --

MATSUMOTO: No, I played for Elk Grove then.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, Elk Grove?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, because they didn't have enough guys.

KOBAYASHI: Ah-h-h.

MATSUMOTO: So I used to ride the train every morning in Oakland, and then I'd come all the way to

Sacramento, and then play ball, take a bath and go home.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, on a Sunday?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, on a Sunday.

KOBAYASHI: Well, you had a pretty busy --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, and I had a lot of fun, you know. I'd get to see all the home town people.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, yeah.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, after November of 1941, were you worried about the fact that the war was about to break out, or did you think it was going to break out?

MATSUMOTO: No, I didn't think so.

KOBAYASHI: Was Pearl Harbor a complete surprise to you too?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Well, did you think Japan would go to war with the United States at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Well... I thought something would break, because they were tightening on the trade and all this stuff, you know, and we couldn't ship this, we couldn't buy that, and all that -- so that was coming, and I understood that much about politics or whatever you call it.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, but I also understand that in those days, the Sacramento Bee, which is a McClatchey newspaper --

MATSUMOTO: They were S.O.B.s.

KOBAYASHI: They were writing a lot of nasty things about --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah!

KOBAYASHI: -- Japanese, even Japanese Americans in this country, weren't they?

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: Did that affect you at all?

MATSUMOTO: It didn't bother me.

KOBAYASHI: Well, did you get upset about the fact that they were writing this kind of --

MATSUMOTO: Well, I was upset about it, but you don't talk about those things, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Well, how is it that you don't talk about it?

MATSUMOTO: Well, you don't talk about it when you're in business, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you mean especially with the customers?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. Right.

KOBAYASHI: So, although they had the nasty press about the Japanese in this country, that did not affect your business then?

MATSUMOTO: No, it didn't hurt my business.

KOBAYASHI: In fact, your business kept on growing at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: And then when the war broke out, you said shortly thereafter you sold your business?

MATSUMOTO: I sold it to the first guy that came along.

KOBAYASHI: What do you mean, "the first guy that came along"?

MATSUMOTO: Well, one Chinese guy came, you know? And there's a funny rule among the Chinese. Say you came to buy my store and you gave me a thousand dollar deposit -- no other Chinese could buy that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so there's a kind of a code of honor among the --

MATSUMOTO: A code of honor among the Chinese! Not the Japanese.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the Chinese -- not to compete with each other.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So they came by and made you an offer and you accepted it?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, and he gave me a deposit, see? It cost me a hundred dollars! I gave him a hundred dollars on top of that to take it back.

KOBAYASHI: To take what back?

MATSUMOTO: The deposit.

KOBAYASHI: Why is that?

MATSUMOTO: Because I could sell it to anybody then.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. But see, that restricted me, and I couldn't sell it to nobody -- no Chinese, and I had a guy I wanted to sell it to. I should never have taken that money, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so you gave him the thousand dollars back, and --

MATSUMOTO: No. I gave him five hundred dollars back. He gave me a five hundred dollar deposit, so I gave him one hundred dollars on top of that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. And then you had --

MATSUMOTO: That gave me clear running.

KOBAYASHI: To sell to anybody that you wanted.

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: And you sold it, because you knew that you would be going to camp?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: And what made you know that you would be going to camp?

MATSUMOTO: I don't know. I just knew it. I don't --

KOBAYASHI: By then, there was all this war story, horror story, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, it wasn't so much that, but I just wanted to get out, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Well, once the war broke out, were the relationship between you and your Caucasian customers any different?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, they would still come by and do business with you?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. They did business until the day I left.

KOBAYASHI: Now, shortly after the war broke out, there were -- weren't there rumors about possible sabotage by Japanese, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they had that.

KOBAYASHI: -- and were you required to do some patrolling against that type of sabotage?

MATSUMOTO: The only thing that they -- that I volunteered my services, you see -- the only thing that I could do was to watch that causeway there --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the Yolo Causeway?

MATSUMOTO: -- yeah, the Yolo Causeway, I had to go out there every night, and --

KOBAYASHI: Oh - patrolling? For whom, then?

MATSUMOTO: You know, the Corps would come out of San Francisco?

KOBAYASHI: Yeah, I know. But you were doing this for whom -- the City of Sacramento, or --

MATSUMOTO: Oh! The Army.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the U.S. Army.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, the U.S. Army.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: And they had these funny flashlights, you know, that had -- you could see your feet, but you couldn't see too far, and --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, that's so the airplanes couldn't see the --

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see -- that's interesting. Okay, Bill -- I think we'd better stop at this point, and then we'll continue another day in the near future.

MATSUMOTO: Alright.

KOBAYASHI: Thank you!

[End of Tape 1, Side 2.]

[Second Session, March 14, 1996]

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

KOBAYASHI: This is again at the same Kobayashi residence. This will be Part II of the interview of William Matsumoto. The last time, we ended up shortly after the break of the second world war and after Bill had sold his business to a Chinese person. Okay, Bill, what did you do between February and evacuation?

MATSUMOTO: Well, all of a sudden, the people of Japanese ancestry had cars, you know, and they wanted to get rid of the cars. So I asked the Chinese guy that bought the store from me whether I could sell cars out there, you see, and he gave me permission to go ahead and sell them. So I sold -- I must have sold forty or fifty cars out there, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Okay, so the Japanese thought that they would be interned at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. Yes.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, but did you, yourself, think that you were going to be interned?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So between February and camp, you were selling cars, principally?

MATSUMOTO: Yes, that's what I was doing most of the time.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. Then what camp did you go to?

MATSUMOTO: First, I went to camp in Walerga, just outside of Sacramento.

KOBAYASHI: You went with your wife?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: You had just been married shortly before that?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. In fact, I think at that time my wife had conceived, so we got a place right next to the hospital, and that's where we stayed.

KOBAYASHI: In Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: How long did you stay in Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: I think that I left in August of that same year.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. Now before going into camp, were you involved in any advising of corporations or assistance with other Nihonjins as far as evacuation was concerned?

MATSUMOTO: Well, not too much, outside of everyday talk, you know. There were all kinds of rumors going around, but I went to the relocation authorities and they asked me if I would go in a couple of days early, you know, and so that's what I did. I moved in before the evacuees all came --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: -- because I had to set up the warehouse and that's what I was going to do.

KOBAYASHI: This was at Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Walerga, yes.

KOBAYASHI: Well, were you involved in anything like J.A.C.L. before the war?

MATSUMOTO: Well, no, because I wasn't too involved with J.A.C.L. at the time, although I did belong to them, but --

KOBAYASHI: Okay. When you say you went in a couple of days ahead of time, what was this for?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I went in to set up the warehouse so that food distribution would go smoothly, rather than not knowing where stuff was, and so we set up the warehouses and all the different kinds of foods.

KOBAYASHI: How many of -- were these mostly Japanese at this time?

MATSUMOTO: I was the only Japanese, but there were mostly people from the government.

KOBAYASHI: And these were Caucasians?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And then when you were in Walerga, you were involved principally in doing this work --

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: -- and you did this from... when did you go into this camp?

MATSUMOTO: I think I went in on May 15th, but I may be mistaken.

KOBAYASHI: But then you went from May, June, July and August, about three months that you were in Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: Now, Walerga was a temporary camp. What were the facilities like in Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Well, to the outside, it was terrible, you know? It wasn't properly maintained, and stuff like that.

KOBAYASHI: Well, what was in Walerga before you went into camp?

MATSUMOTO: Well, it was just a wide open field.

KOBAYASHI: And they had just made temporary barracks, was that what happened?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: And do you know approximately how many people were there?

MATSUMOTO: I think there were nine thousand there at one time.

KOBAYASHI: Mostly from Sacramento?

MATSUMOTO: Around this area, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, after Walerga, where did you go?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we got orders to go to Tule Lake.

KOBAYASHI: So you moved to Tule Lake with your family?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, your wife had conceived, but she had not given birth yet at this time?

MATSUMOTO: No, no.

KOBAYASHI: Now, what did you do when you got to Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Well, then when I went to Tule Lake, we had written a letter to this mess division guy in Tule Lake, and so when I got there, in a day or so, he called me. I went to see him, and he wanted me to do the same kind of work at Tule Lake.

KOBAYASHI: As you were doing at Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: Now, this was a Hakujuin or Nihonjin --

MATSUMOTO: Hakujuin.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, a Hakujuin person. So he was part of the Relocation Authority, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, he was part of it, but he was in the Mess Division, see?

KOBAYASHI: Oh. So what would you do in the Mess Division?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I did exactly what I did over there at Walerga, only on a bigger basis.

KOBAYASHI: Meaning what?

MATSUMOTO: Well, at the outset there, I had about fourteen trucks to deliver the food, because there were a lot more people in Tule, you see.

KOBAYASHI: So you were like the manager or supervisor of --

MATSUMOTO: Well, the supervisor. I had a lot of people --

KOBAYASHI: But you made sure the food went to each block, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, each block. We delivered by blocks.

KOBAYASHI: I see. But you were in charge of the entire operation?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I had one hundred and sixty eight people working like that.

KOBAYASHI: And then to whom did you report?

MATSUMOTO: Well, the Mess Division, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! In other words, you were the top as far as the Nihonjins were concerned in the camp, and you did this all that time?

MATSUMOTO: Oh -- yeah, all the time I was there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. So you were paid a lot more than the other people at that time.

MATSUMOTO: No! Nineteen was the most paid, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. Even though though you had all this responsibility?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. And how long did you stay in Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Let's see. I think -- I've been trying to think back. When I went to -- I've been thinking about it, and I really don't know. But I was in Tule Lake approximately a year and a half.

KOBAYASHI: A year and a half?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, do you remember this "yes, yes, no, no" kind of question issue?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. That was my separation from Tule Lake.

KOBAYASHI: Now, what was that, exactly, that "yes, yes, no, no" --

MATSUMOTO: Well, actually, in essence, what they were asking us, when the United States was invaded by the enemy, was: Would I stand up and fight for the United States?

KOBAYASHI: And you answered yes.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Was there any other question asked?

MATSUMOTO: There were several questions asked. I don't recall exactly what they were?

KOBAYASHI: But the principle question was, would --

MATSUMOTO: They were 29 and 30, see, which were "yes, yes" or "no, no".

KOBAYASHI: Okay.

MATSUMOTO: So I know what I told them. At the time that the first question -- you know, if the enemy invaded us, would I, you know, in case the enemy invaded us, would I stand up and fight for them, and I said, "Yes, I would". On the other hand, I told them, "You've got to think about my position. My folks are in this camp too, you know, and wouldn't it be awkward for me to, you know, fight for the United States when my

parents are behind barbed wire fences", you know?

KOBAYASHI: Did your parents say "no" or why did you --

MATSUMOTO: No, no. It wasn't that. But I mean, you know, if somebody invades us at Tule Lake, then of course, you know, my parents are there, and I didn't think it was right for the United States to ask us that kind of question, because --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: -- we are American citizens, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Okay. Now, and because of, I guess, you answered yes, and you were --

MATSUMOTO: No, yes I answered.

KOBAYASHI: And what about the Miller box?

MATSUMOTO: The Miller was: Would I, despite my folks being in camp, would I sign up and fight for the United States? I said no.

KOBAYASHI: But in spite of that answer, they still released you to go to Amache?

MATSUMOTO: Then, about two months later, I got a notification from the Relocation Authority that I was considered loyal, and that I could go anytime I wanted.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see! So that's how the separation took place?

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: And so you chose Amache?

MATSUMOTO: Uh-huh. I'd never been to Colorado, you see, so I chose Amache.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So, are there some vivid memories of Tule Lake, from your viewpoint?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, there are some.

KOBAYASHI: What are the some of the most important in your memory?

MATSUMOTO: Well, particularly, it was bad when this questionnaire came out. You know, "yes, yes, no, no" and that type of thing. And we, I know in our block, we got together in our block, and our block was the Sacramento block, and we decided that everybody would have a whistle. So we all had whistles.

KOBAYASHI: And what did the whistles mean?

MATSUMOTO: Well, if anybody came to give us a bad time, then we would blow the whistles, see?

KOBAYASHI: So there were people who were --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. There were "anti" people, too.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, okay. And you were afraid of violence from the "anti" people?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: So, but your particular block involved Sacramento people?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, most of them.

KOBAYASHI: Most of them. And your block mostly were going to basically remain loyal to the United States?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Now, you remember that. Are there any other things that you remember, like living conditions, or weather, or --

MATSUMOTO: Weather was, you know, we had snow in the winter, and during the summer it was hotter than "H", really, you know, because we were right up at the lake bed.

KOBAYASHI: Are there any other incidents that stand out in your mind, or --

MATSUMOTO: Well, we had, you know, a few of misunderstandings among the different people, you know, and like that. But outside of that, it was a normal village, I would say.

KOBAYASHI: Now, I also understand that at one time there was a murder that took place, and you were someplace near that murder?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, well he was in the next block, you see.

KOBAYASHI: Well, what happened there?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I think that was a -- what would you call it?

KOBAYASHI: You mean it was a gangster thing, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, no gangsters.

KOBAYASHI: -- was it about gambling?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, it wasn't about gambling either?

MATSUMOTO: No. It was a three way deal, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Oh. You mean a love triangle?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, that's what caused that one.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. Did you see the deceased person after he was killed, or --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: -- oh, you saw the body?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. He was cut from ear to ear.

KOBAYASHI: So you remember that incident?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yes.

KOBAYASHI: Were there other incidents of violence at Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: No, there wasn't too much, really.

KOBAYASHI: But what about the fear of these "anti" people?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, they didn't bother you too much.

KOBAYASHI: So it was largely just a matter of people voicing their differences?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: So then, in 19 -- well, by the time you left Tule Lake, you had a child, right?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: Your child was born in Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: Boy or girl?

MATSUMOTO: I had a girl.

KOBAYASHI: And what was her or his name?

MATSUMOTO: Betty -- that's my oldest girl.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so your oldest daughter was born in Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and you have another daughter?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I had another one who was born in Amache.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, okay. I see. So when you left Tule Lake and you went to Amache, what did you do in Amache?

MATSUMOTO: I did more or less the same thing. But I worked in a butcher shop, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Doing what?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, cutting meat, you know.

KOBAYASHI: So do you know how long you stayed in Amache?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I was in Amache -- I guess I was in Amache about nine months, I guess.

KOBAYASHI: And what did you do in Amache? I mean, besides working in the butcher shop as a butcher. Were you hoping to get out very soon, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. It was very -- well, you see -- Amache was run a little bit different than Tule Lake. Tule Lake was -- you couldn't go outside, you know. I was able to go, but the others weren't able to go.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you went out of Tule Lake because of the mess duties?

MATSUMOTO: No, no. No, no. They made us move, and --

KOBAYASHI: No, you said you were able to move out, in and out, of camp in Amache, but were you able to do that at Tule Lake too?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I was able to.

KOBAYASHI: And that's because of your position as a --

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: But at Amache, anybody could go in and out of camp?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Well, what would you do going in and out of camp?

MATSUMOTO: Well, that little town there -- I forget what the name of that town is -- but there's a little town there. They had a pool hall, a drug store, liquor store and all that, and they were very lenient as far as liquor was concerned, because I know plenty of liquor came from there.

KOBAYASHI: So people at camp would periodically go out there and --

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: -- but where did they get the money to spend at a place like this?

MATSUMOTO: Well, what little we had, we would just spend it all.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. And did you go to movie theaters and things like that?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. There again, I was able to do that, but most of the people weren't. See, I had to go once a week, we had to go to the truck in Lamar, which was about twenty miles.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: And they had movie theaters and stuff like that.
And we would go there while we were waiting for
the meat to get ready, we could go to a movie
and stuff like that.

KOBAYASHI: Alright, then. What would you consider to be
the best part of like Amache, for example?

MATSUMOTO: I guess the leniency would be my main thing.

KOBAYASHI: And what was the best part of Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Well, Tule Lake was just like a small village.

KOBAYASHI: But there really wasn't anything good about Tule
Lake?

MATSUMOTO: No! There was nothing good about it.

KOBAYASHI: What about Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Well, Walerga was --

KOBAYASHI: What was the best part about Walerga?

MATSUMOTO: Well, we got to eat good!

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the food at Walerga was better than the food
at Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah!

KOBAYASHI: Oh, it was?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: What was the worst part about Tule Lake?

MATSUMOTO: Well, Tule Lake was very spread out, you know. Of course, we needed the space, but there was a lot of inconvenience. Like, I lived in an area where all the sewage to Tule Lake was coming. We used to call it Sewage Heights because that's where all the sewage was.

KOBAYASHI: And you could smell the sewage?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. When the wind blows right, boy -- you get all of it!

KOBAYASHI: What was the worst part of Amache?

MATSUMOTO: Amache had sand storms, which I didn't like.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so it was kind of like a desert in Colorado?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: What about the Army? Did the Army try to draft you?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Why was that?

MATSUMOTO: I had a 4-F card.

KOBAYASHI: Why did you have a 4-F card?

MATSUMOTO: Because of my leg.

KOBAYASHI: Oh. That was the leg that was injured from --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, when I had that accident.

KOBAYASHI: -- when your sister was killed?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, that remained with you the rest of your life?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I still got it.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see you limp. But I didn't realize that's where you got the limp!

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So after you left Amache, where did you go?

MATSUMOTO: After I left Amache, I went to a town called Rocky Ford, which was about eighty miles from camp, and I relocated there.

KOBAYASHI: Was this in Colorado?

MATSUMOTO: Uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: And what did you do there?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I got a job at the local onion processing plant, you know, and so I hauled onions and sorted them into --

KOBAYASHI: When you say, "hauled onions", you mean you were driving truck?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. And while you were still in Walerga, no I mean Amache, did you have any real desire to do something? What did you want most of all when you were in Amache? To get out of camp?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. To get out of camp.

KOBAYASHI: Now, you said you went to this Rocky Ford? Why did you select Rocky Ford rather than some other place?

MATSUMOTO: Well, that was closest, you know. And I knew a few Nihonjin people in Rocky Ford.

KOBAYASHI: Now, these were Nihonjin people who left camp, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, there were some who lived there before --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, before the war?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And these are people who never went to camp?

MATSUMOTO: No -- they never went to camp. They all lived around there.

KOBAYASHI: Did they -- do you know if they had any problems like discrimination, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, no.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, they weren't discriminated --

MATSUMOTO: It was minor.

KOBAYASHI: Minor. Oh, so after you left Amache and went to Rocky Ford, you didn't notice any discrimination against you, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, I never had any problems. I worked for the local onion growers associations.

KOBAYASHI: But that was mostly Caucasians?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, mostly Caucasians.

KOBAYASHI: And you didn't have any problems dealing with the people or anything like that?

MATSUMOTO: No, no.

KOBAYASHI: They treated you just like another individual?

MATSUMOTO: Right, right. In fact, better than others.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, is that right?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So how long did you stay in Rocky Ford?

MATSUMOTO: I stayed there during the summer and then through the winter, and then I left Rocky Ford on December 25th.

KOBAYASHI: Of what year?

MATSUMOTO: '45.

KOBAYASHI: '45? That was right after the war ended.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Then where did you go?

MATSUMOTO: Then I came back to Sacramento.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you came right back to Sacramento?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: What was the reception in Sacramento from the community?

MATSUMOTO: Well, it was real shocking for me, because when I came back to Sacramento, everything was already operating, and they had pool halls and restaurants, and everything was all established there.

KOBAYASHI: You mean like Akito Masaki was already back here?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah! They came out of Tule Lake, and they got to come straight home.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Oh, so by the time you came to Sacramento, there already were a lot of Nihonjins back here already.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, oh yeah! A lot of Nihonjins were here.

KOBAYASHI: So where in Sacramento did you go to?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I stayed at a hotel on Third Street until I found a job.

KOBAYASHI: Because by then, you already had two children?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right. So when I first came back from Amache, my folks were in, what you call it, Fresno, and so I took my family down there and left Sacramento.

KOBAYASHI: So how come your parents went down to Fresno?

MATSUMOTO: Well, that's her parents.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, her parents! Well, what about your parents?

MATSUMOTO: My parents, they went to Chicago after --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, after Amache? Did they go to Amache too?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So, after Amache, they went to Chicago?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: So, basically, your family separated --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: -- after Amache, then?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. But all the families were together in Amache. All my brothers, and everybody.

KOBAYASHI: They all decided to go to Amache? And they went from Amache and Amache is where everybody separated after --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So you came back to Sacramento then, and you lived in a hotel for awhile until you found a job. And where did you find a job?

MATSUMOTO: Well, there was a lot of sharecropping -- you know, 50/50 sharecropping.

KOBAYASHI: What kind of --

MATSUMOTO: Raising tomatoes. And so, you know George Orite.

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: So I asked him, "Will you go in partners with me? We'll go raise tomatoes." He said yes, and so that's what we did.

KOBAYASHI: So you and George Orite went together?

MATSUMOTO: Right. We went together as partners.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: In West Sacramento. You know where the Pheasant Club is?

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: Well, right in back of there.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So how many acres were you --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, we had about one hundred acres of alfalfa and we had about forty acres that we could raise tomatoes on, and that's what we did.

KOBAYASHI: So you did that year around for how long?

MATSUMOTO: One year.

KOBAYASHI: And why did you quit?

MATSUMOTO: Uh-h, I was tired of it, and not being a farmer and all, I didn't care for it.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! You did this of necessity. There were no other kinds of work available --

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: -- and you didn't have a store anymore, so, by this time, it must have been the end of 1946 or 1947. And what did you do after that?

MATSUMOTO: By then, I got a job working for the Signal Depot.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, U.S. Army?

MATSUMOTO: No. Before that, I went to work for S.P. -- you know, the Southern Pacific?

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: And they were paying, oh -- eighty two cents an hour. So one day, I asked the boss, "Hey, when do I get a raise?" And he said, "Oh, you'll get a raise in a couple of months." And so I asked, "How much of a raise?" He said, "two and a half cents". So then I started looking for another job, and then I found this job at the Signal Depot and they were paying ninety five cents!

KOBAYASHI: So how long did you work there?

MATSUMOTO: I worked there for about three months.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, and then what did you do?

MATSUMOTO: Well, while I was there, now, I didn't work actually. I went to school because I told the guy, the boss over there, I asked him if I could learn to drive those jitneys, and I did that --

oh, it took about a month and a half to learn that -- and then I got a certificate, so they put me on the job. And then, about three days later, I got a letter from Uncle Sam.

KOBAYASHI: What letter was that?

MATSUMOTO: That I was a good boy, a hard worker, and they were sorry, but because of the government budget, they would have to let me go.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so they laid you off?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they laid me off.

KOBAYASHI: So then what happened?

MATSUMOTO: So then, I was fooling around, and I went to the General Produce stand, and said, "Hey, you guys got a job for me?", and they said, "Hey, you know how to pack tomatoes?" and I said, "Yeah - - I raised those tomatoes!" And so he said yes, and I got a job there and I stayed there for a time.

KOBAYASHI: You say, "for a time"? How long?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I was there for five years.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! At General Produce?

MATSUMOTO: Uh-huh.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I didn't know that. So you were there until the early fifties then?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I worked there until the early fifties until I got hit by a truck and then, well --

KOBAYASHI: Okay. Now during this time, say from '45 on, when you came back, you said you saw that all the businesses were already operating, and so on.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah!

KOBAYASHI: But for those, like yourself, who did not have a business, a lot of you had to struggle. Is that what happened -- a lot of you had to struggle and did this same type of thing, going from job to job, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. Well, I was looking for something, you know? I wanted to be in sales. That was in the back of my mind, all the time, and no matter what I did, I always knew I wanted to be a salesman.

KOBAYASHI: Well, was it still hard for Nihonjins coming out of camp to get jobs in Sacramento, or --

MATSUMOTO: It was. It was difficult.

KOBAYASHI: Now, how was the community as a whole? Was there a lot of anti-Japanese feeling here?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. There certainly was.

KOBAYASHI: And there definitely was segregated housing in Sacramento, wasn't there?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I lived in an apartment at 5th and P Street, there in an apartment.

KOBAYASHI: Well, yes, but weren't there certain areas where Japanese Americans couldn't go to --

MATSUMOTO: I would imagine there was. I never ran into that myself.

KOBAYASHI: Well, but you didn't go out of the downtown area. Is that where most of the Nihonjins lived for awhile after the war?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. We had a regular Japanese town.

KOBAYASHI: Where did that extend from?

MATSUMOTO: Well, like third, fourth and fifth and it went from L, M, N, O, P.

KOBAYASHI: That was a pretty extensive area. And most of the Nihonjins lived in duplexes or flats, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: -- in that area?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So you and your wife and your two children lived in an apartment?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, we lived in an apartment.

KOBAYASHI: And how long did you stay in the apartment?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, we stayed about a year I guess.

KOBAYASHI: And then eventually you bought a house?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, then I bought a house. I went into this Bermuda business, and I made enough money for a down payment on a house and so I bought a house.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. And where was this house?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, the house was at eleventh between T and U.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, okay.

MATSUMOTO: Where Washington School is.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, right. And that area still has a lot of Asians living there still today.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah! There are a lot of Asians still there.

KOBAYASHI: And did you have any, say what, basically when you were working at General Produce packing tomatoes, you were dealing mostly with Nihonjins?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. There were a lot of Japanese.

KOBAYASHI: And did you have any dealings with Caucasians at that time -- business wise?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And you didn't have any problems dealing with Caucasians at that time?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: So you didn't really feel much in the way of discrimination at that time.

MATSUMOTO: No. One of my people that I still admire to this day was Jim Denio who --

KOBAYASHI: Oh! The guy in Roseville!

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. He started at ground level and he was my best customer. So anything we had bad at the -- oh, I shouldn't say bad, but you know --

KOBAYASHI: Over ripe and things like that?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. Over ripe and things like that, he bought them, see. So I would stay there and wait for him to tell me what he wanted.

KOBAYASHI: So then he would take that to Roseville and resell it?

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: That's how he started.

KOBAYASHI: So then, you worked in General Produce until 1959?

MATSUMOTO: '51 or '52.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and then you said you got hit by a truck.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I got hit by a truck.

KOBAYASHI: At work, or --

MATSUMOTO: No. In Stockton. I went out there to load up potatoes and it was really hot -- in the middle of July -- and I thought well, I'll get a Coke. So I saw a grocery store on this side where they had ice cold Coke. So I stopped my truck, and I got out of my truck, and lit a cigarette and started across the road and --

KOBAYASHI: So you ended up in the hospital?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: How long were you in the hospital?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, for a couple of weeks.

KOBAYASHI: Did you have fractures, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, no broken bones, but I had --

KOBAYASHI: So in those days, did you have disability insurance?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I was fully covered with workman's comp under that.

KOBAYASHI: So when you recovered, you didn't go back to General Produce?

MATSUMOTO: Uh - no, I didn't go back.

KOBAYASHI: Well, what did you do then? You didn't have a job, and --

MATSUMOTO: Well, I was at General Produce and I was trying to get into the sale of insurance. So, in my

position, I thought, well -- I might as well make use of this. So I started going around to get jobs for these guys who were looking for jobs and --

KOBAYASHI: You said because of your position? What did you mean by that?

MATSUMOTO: Well, because I was head of the delivery for General Produce, I got to go to all the other stores, so I got to go look at a couple of places, you know, go around town, and they let me go to see these guys. And of course, we naturally would get their business too. Well, at the same time, I was getting these guys to all go to work for me.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: So they were the basis for my life insurance business.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, because you had already built this --

MATSUMOTO: I had in mind, all the time, while I was doing all this other thing, that --

KOBAYASHI: -- so you were really busy then. You were working --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah!

KOBAYASHI: -- you were working at the produce place, plus the delivery, and getting new customers, and trying to get jobs for other Niseis.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Do you recall some of the Niseis that you got jobs for?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. A whole bunch of guys.

KOBAYASHI: Some that are still living today?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah!

KOBAYASHI: Can you tell me some?

[End Tape 2, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

KOBAYASHI: You said you were able to get jobs for people like your brother-in-law and one or two others?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, and Ed Moriachi and others.

KOBAYASHI: So after you laid the groundwork, you went into this insurance business?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, that's right. But I only did part time insurance, so I still worked in the morning at two o'clock, and --

KOBAYASHI: At General Produce.

MATSUMOTO: -- yeah, and I worked until noon. So then I'd go home and sleep two or three hours, and then, after five o'clock, I'd go out and see my customers. And as you know, everybody let their insurance go during the war, so nobody had any insurance.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So then, for what company were you doing this?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I searched all over. I went to several different companies and, like Prudential and --

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: -- but every one, they charged an extra premium if you were oriental, Japanese, Chinese, see?

KOBAYASHI: And what was the reason for that?

MATSUMOTO: Because they were Japanese and Chinese!

KOBAYASHI: Not because they lived less years, or anything else like that?

MATSUMOTO: Well, that's what they assumed. Then, finally, I found this West Coast insurance place who said they don't charge extra premium for colored, Japanese, Chinese -- it's all standard. So I said, "Sign me up!".

KOBAYASHI: So you started doing this on a part time basis?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. Part time basis.

KOBAYASHI: So when did you do this on a full time basis?

MATSUMOTO: I went full time in '47?

KOBAYASHI: Well, it couldn't be '47.

MATSUMOTO: Let's see - '51, right after the --

KOBAYASHI: '51. Right after the --

MATSUMOTO: -- right after the, when I got hit by the truck. Then I went to full time insurance.

KOBAYASHI: And was it that insurance that brought the business for you?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, sure. It was very lucrative.

KOBAYASHI: Very lucrative. Did you have many competitors in this business?

MATSUMOTO: No. There weren't too many. In fact, in those days, people would call you up and say, "Hey, I

want to buy some insurance -- would you come over?". The prospects were all there.

KOBAYASHI: So in other words, they were coming to you a lot of the time, rather than you searching for new clients?

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: I see. And so you, from 1951 until very recently, you --

MATSUMOTO: I was in the insurance business forty seven years.

KOBAYASHI: And this was all with West Coast Life Insurance?

MATSUMOTO: West Coast Life Insurance.

KOBAYASHI: While you were doing this insurance work, did you get involved in other community activities?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. I was very active in the J.A.C.L. In actuality, seventy five percent of my success in the insurance business was due to the J.A.C.L.

KOBAYASHI: And why do you say this?

MATSUMOTO: Because I served in several capacities with the J.A.C.L.

KOBAYASHI: I knew you were the advisor, the national advisor, but --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, five years. Then I became third vice president, and the next year I became second vice president, and, you know --

KOBAYASHI: Nationally.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, on a national basis.

KOBAYASHI: But you didn't go on after that, though. What was the reason for that?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, you know. I was getting old. (Laughter)

KOBAYASHI: Well, I know for example, you used to go to the Northern California and Western Nevada District meetings and a lot of --

MATSUMOTO: Well, I went to a lot of national conventions, too.

KOBAYASHI: But you say you owe a lot of your success to the J.A.C.L. By that, do you mean that because of your connection with the J.A.C.L. that you met a lot of new people and made new contacts and --

MATSUMOTO: No, it wasn't so much the clientele so much. Well, it's that they knew I was doing that kind of work, you know, helping others, and I guess the Japanese were very grateful for that and that's why they bought from me.

KOBAYASHI: Now, along with the insurance business, weren't you involved in a bowling venture at one time?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I did that too.

KOBAYASHI: And what was that?

MATSUMOTO: Well, there were five of us who thought of this idea to open a bowling alley because it was up and coming, you see.

KOBAYASHI: There were a lot of Nihonjins bowling at that time?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah! There were a lot of us bowling. And so we put together a company and that's how we started.

KOBAYASHI: And what was the name of this bowling alley?

MATSUMOTO: El Rancho Bowl.

KOBAYASHI: And so how long did you participate in that business?

MATSUMOTO: Twenty years.

KOBAYASHI: And you finally sold out, is that what happened?

MATSUMOTO: I sold.

KOBAYASHI: And when you first starting this bowling -- wasn't there some kind of discrimination against the Japanese about bowling?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Well, but you could not bowl and --

MATSUMOTO: No. It was just before that, that through the J.A.C.L., Mas Satow, (I don't know if you remember) --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, yes! He was an avid bowler, and the national secretary for years --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. Well, he was the guy who was instrumental in getting me a license with the A.B.C.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! Because the A.B.C. had a "Caucasian only" clause.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. So Mas Satow was very instrumental in eliminating the --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, Mas Satow. He and Mike Masaoka.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: Those two guys worked hard for that.

KOBAYASHI: So then, as far as the J.A.C.L. is concerned, what do you remember best about the J.A.C.L.?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I think the J.A.C.L. is a worthy organization because of the very rules and regulations that regulate the J.A.C.L. It was very fair.

KOBAYASHI: I remember there were a lot of times that, for example, we had the "infamous 14" I think it

was, and I remember you were there, and Mike Masaoka was there at one time, and --

MATSUMOTO: Right, right.

KOBAYASHI: -- and there were a lot of causes that I know you were involved in, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. But I had good help. Those guys were wonderful people. And we didn't work for any money. The only guy who really got paid was Mike.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, yeah. Because he was a paid person. Oh, yes. I understand. This was the good thing about the J.A.C.L. It was such an old, established organization, and everybody volunteered and no one ever fought about getting paid for anything that they did.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, no. We didn't expect that.

KOBAYASHI: Now, let me ask you -- what about your two daughters you said you have?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: And they were both raised here in Sacramento?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Did you ever discuss anything like your camp life with your children?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they knew pretty well.

KOBAYASHI: Did they ask you about it?

MATSUMOTO: We did talk about it, and --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you did talk about it. Did they ever have any reactions, one way or the other, about the camps?

MATSUMOTO: No, they didn't show too much, what you call it -- you know, for or against. Well, we knew it wasn't right. Of course, that's a thing that happened to people of Japanese ancestry. What can you do? War was --

KOBAYASHI: Now, your children -- were they raised in like the Japanese culture, or --

MATSUMOTO: Well, we tried! (Laughter.)

KOBAYASHI: Oh! What religion are you?

MATSUMOTO: I'm Buddhist.

KOBAYASHI: And did your children go to the Buddhist Church or Sunday school and so on?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: So they were raised in the Buddhist tradition, at least, and there's a certain amount of Japanese culture through that.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah. At the first outset, when we first moved over here to Eleventh Street, when we

bought the first house, they went to the Presbyterian Church, on Eighth and P.

KOBAYASHI: You mean that is still the same church that is there today?

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: That was there in 1945 - 46?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I guess it was there then. I never went to Sunday school, but those guys used to come around and pick them up.

KOBAYASHI: So then, do your children speak Japanese?

MATSUMOTO: Partial.

KOBAYASHI: Did you ever speak any Japanese at home?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, oh yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and your wife spoke Japanese too?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: What was your wife's name?

MATSUMOTO: Miyoko.

KOBAYASHI: And she was known as May?

MATSUMOTO: May.

KOBAYASHI: And she died not too long ago, is that right?
How many years ago?

MATSUMOTO: She died in 1987, four and a half years short of our fiftieth anniversary.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, that's right. You were married in 1941.

MATSUMOTO: Yes, '41. I was married before the war. She was a good wife, and I still miss her.

KOBAYASHI: And did she work during your marriage?

MATSUMOTO: She worked for a little while. She worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles for fifteen years, I think.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. That's when a lot of Nisei women used to work up there. I kind of recall a number of Nisei woman used to work at the D.M.V. What kind of work did she do?

MATSUMOTO: She was the -- I don't know, she used to monkey with cars. I saw her do it a couple of times, but --

KOBAYASHI: She never worked with you in your office.

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: So you had your business for thirty seven years, did you say?

MATSUMOTO: Thirty seven years.

KOBAYASHI: And did you work for West Coast Insurance all those years?

MATSUMOTO: That's the only company I worked for.

KOBAYASHI: So in life insurance, don't they have a prize for the "million dollar man" or whatever it is?

MATSUMOTO: I guess. But I never did make that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, you never did make that. I know that some of the people in the business advertise that they are million dollar --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: I guess at one time, I guess I thought that it was something prestigious, or --

MATSUMOTO: It's prestigious in one sense of the word, but it isn't prestigious in another sense, because they sold junk to get it, you know what I mean? They would sell anything just so they could --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so they could get the --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. So they could get the dollar value to the point where they would count them in the million dollar class.

KOBAYASHI: But not necessarily for the protection or well being of the family and so forth.

MATSUMOTO: I don't say everyone!

KOBAYASHI: No, I understand.

MATSUMOTO: Because there are a few of them who actually worked in the proper way, you know, and did a proper job for their client. But everybody didn't do it that way.

KOBAYASHI: What have you noticed is the biggest change since the time that you first started until the time you retired?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I would say the guarantees that were there. They aren't there as they were when I started.

KOBAYASHI: What kind of guarantees?

MATSUMOTO: Well, if I sold you a policy, and I said, "Chuck, in twenty years you're going to get this much money" -- or in thirty years or whatever -- it's guaranteed. Today, it isn't guaranteed.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, why is that?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I think they've changed the rules, you know, on certain kinds of policies.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, what about things like term life insurance and mutual funds -- have they affected your business at all?

MATSUMOTO: Well, they never bothered me. But now they are.

KOBAYASHI: Because I read somewhere recently that it's really changed life insurance.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Now, it's almost fifty years since 1945. During the last fifty years in Sacramento, what are some of the highlights of your life in the last

fifty years? I know you're very active in the Hiroshima Ken Jin Kai.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, well, that was a good organization.

KOBAYASHI: Well, I know you do a lot for the organization.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I understand.

KOBAYASHI: It is a good organization.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, well I worked within the Sacramento community quite a bit. See, I did the picnics for twenty five years, you know?

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: Took charge of it; did it every year. Yeah, the Hiroshima Ken Jin Kai -- I've been in about thirty five years.

KOBAYASHI: Yes, and you also write for the Japanese paper, too.

MATSUMOTO: I try to! (Laughter.)

KOBAYASHI: Yes, I know -- but you do write for them. And you keep the Sacramento public who reads the Japanese vernacular newspaper aware of what's going on.

MATSUMOTO: I was amazed to hear how many guys read my column. I didn't know they read it.

KOBAYASHI: Well, I think it's the only column, being the San Francisco Nichibei is such a popular and

accurate newspaper in Sacramento, especially for a lot of Nihonjins. My mother still subscribes to it, and she saves it, so we read the English section.

MATSUMOTO: (Laughter.)

KOBAYASHI: And you're also in the travel business, right?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: When did you start that?

MATSUMOTO: I started that in -- oh, you know, I went to Japan in 1972, and I thought hey, this is great.

KOBAYASHI: Did you go on a tour or did you go individually?

MATSUMOTO: No, on a tour.

KOBAYASHI: A tour.

MATSUMOTO: But I've been to Japan ten times since.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! On a tour that you put together?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, that I put together, and it's been very -- oh, what do you call it? -- good for my -- you know, that I am Japanese and I'd better be proud of it, you know.

KOBAYASHI: So you've made tours to Japan. Have you made tours to other places, or --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I've never gone to Europe because I don't think there's anything there. But I've gone to

Canada and I've been to Canada maybe fifteen times.

KOBAYASHI: And these are all tours that you arranged?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: What about Hawaii?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I haven't gone in several years. I think the last time I went was the twelfth time.

KOBAYASHI: What is your favorite place, as far as travel is concerned?

MATSUMOTO: I like Hawaii.

KOBAYASHI: Hawaii the best?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And what is the reason for that?

MATSUMOTO: Well, it's so much like Japan, you know. Like, you go to Hawaii at New Year's time and everybody sits there on the floor and the food is -- everything is so much -- they are so much like -- in Hawaii, you have to take your shoes off when you go in the house. Now, I don't say that's good, but I like the culture to stay with them and they have done that.

KOBAYASHI: Do you feel more comfortable among Nihonjins or among Hakujins?

MATSUMOTO: It didn't make any difference.

KOBAYASHI: It doesn't make any difference, even today?

MATSUMOTO: Even today it doesn't bother me.

KOBAYASHI: And you are also called on very frequently to be Master of Ceremonies at different functions, are you not?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I did a lot of that.

KOBAYASHI: You did a lot of those, too, because in a sense, you were known as, like "Mr. Sacramento"! --

MATSUMOTO: (Laughter.)

KOBAYASHI: -- at least among the Nihonjin community.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I don't know.

KOBAYASHI: Well, but in all modesty, too, you were well known among the Nisei community, and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, they all know me.

KOBAYASHI: -- in the Japanese community.

MATSUMOTO: Well, going back to the J.A.C.L., I think that helped me tremendously because everybody knew me and knew who I was.

KOBAYASHI: Well, in all the time that you put into the J.A.C.L., as far as time -- this huge amount of time -- and money out of your own pocket, that you used for their --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, it cost me plenty.

KOBAYASHI: Do you regret any of that?

MATSUMOTO: No. I got it all back and then some, I feel.

KOBAYASHI: And do you feel the younger Sanseis or Yonseis should be joining an organization like J.A.C.L., or do you think J.A.C.L. is something of a --

MATSUMOTO: I think the J.A.C.L. is a must. I think that it should be here all the time.

KOBAYASHI: And this may be putting you on the spot, but as far as J.A.C.L. is concerned, what do you think about this new -- I don't want to say new -- but, this controversy that's erupted lately about whether J.A.C.L. should get involved or not in issues like same sex marriage or that type of issue that may not directly affect Nihonjins, but do you think J.A.C.L. should get involved in things like that, or do you feel the opposite?

MATSUMOTO: Yes.

KOBAYASHI: Now, the J.A.C.L. then, in your opinion, should be concerned more with the what of the Japanese, like the discrimination of the Japanese, or to advance the Japanese cause, or Japanese-American cause, or what?

MATSUMOTO: I think what we are doing in J.A.C.L., and I follow it although I don't go to the meetings

and stuff, I follow it because I believe in it, you know. It has taught me a few good things that have helped me personally, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. But you disagree with some of the policies and some of the direction that the J.A.C.L. is taking?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I do.

KOBAYASHI: You haven't been too active in the last five years with the J.A.C.L., though?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Until then, though, you were fairly active.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. But when I got the feeling that the J.A.C.L. was in a transitional period with all that --

KOBAYASHI: Which is about five or six years ago.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: I know that's when a lot of this controversy started. Now, unfortunately, we have this controversy today, and hopefully that will --

MATSUMOTO: You mean affirmative action?

KOBAYASHI: No, no -- not affirmative action. I mean these charges or accusations -- I don't mean to use the word accusations -- but basically charges that were brought by the Sacramento J.A.C.L.

against the national president and so on, that caused a tremendous rift for a time being, but once something like that happens, it takes time to heal.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: But I think the healing process has started.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. Well, I think the transition is something else. But on the other hand, the money part of it too. You see, we used to operate on a budget of something like, you know, the most I know of that we budgeted was five thousand dollars in one year. That isn't a hell of a lot of money.

KOBAYASHI: You mean for the Sacramento chapter?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, no, no, no -- for the whole national deal.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, but that was in the late forties, though, wasn't it?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Okay, but I mean obviously, today you can't do that though.

MATSUMOTO: Oh, no.

KOBAYASHI: Unfortunately, everything is a different story now -- expensive.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. We moved from, you know, volunteers to paid, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Well, but that's because of the size, and the spread of the J.A.C.L.

MATSUMOTO: But we haven't gained, you know, that much in memberships.

KOBAYASHI: But what do you think is the cause for the instability or even the decline in membership? Why do you think that's happened?

MATSUMOTO: I think that's pride -- just pride.

KOBAYASHI: What do you mean, pride?

MATSUMOTO: Well, a guy isn't proud to be a Japanese-American, you see?

KOBAYASHI: You mean the younger people?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. They don't do it. There's no loyalty. See, that is the biggest thing, I think. In my thinking, and in fact, I'm writing an article right now about this, about my thoughts about why we have a decline in membership. One is loyalty, and one of them is pride. We have no pride anymore.

KOBAYASHI: As Japanese Americans?

MATSUMOTO: That's right. Now, I don't say that we should be God or anything like that, but you know.

KOBAYASHI: Now that you've kind of retired, what are you doing these days?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I'm just fooling around with travel, and because I've spent so much time I thought about, oh I guess, I've got about three thousand policies that are still paying premiums, and --

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: -- and I should do for them what I can, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, and service them, the families, in case the policy holder dies and they need some help?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. Last year, I handled ten difficult --

KOBAYASHI: Okay, but what happens after -- let's say, what happens when you come to a point where you no longer can handle the policies or you pass away, what happens to the policies?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, the home office takes care of them.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the home office takes care of it?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Well, would your estate benefit at all from what goes back to the company, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, no.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, it doesn't. Oh, I had a question that whenever you had these policies, they stayed kind of with you the rest of your life, and --

MATSUMOTO: No. You see, I took a different contract.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: See, what the insurance industry does -- see, we were on wages, you see, based on what you could do. But I told the company I want all of my money in five years. Like say, you bought a five thousand dollar policy. See, I'll get that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, the first five years is the premium, and the rest goes to the company?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I have nothing to do with it after that.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so actually, as far as the money part of it is concerned, you have no obligation to the company today?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: But you do this because of your moral obligation to your customers?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. I've seen so many -- see, I had six or seven Chinese working for me, you know, at the agency, and those guys have folded up their tents and gone. They don't even talk to their clients.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, so you had to follow up on those?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. I would call and ask about those particular houses, and I would do what I can for them.

KOBAYASHI: Yes. But as you say, as you are retired, as far as the company is concerned, you really don't have to do this if you don't want to.

MATSUMOTO: That's right.

KOBAYASHI: Again, I think that goes back to the Nihonjin tradition of loyalty. As you say: Loyalty to the company, loyalty to people who benefited --

MATSUMOTO: Right.

KOBAYASHI: -- and you benefited in the sense that you earned some premium monies too.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, oh yeah.

KOBAYASHI: I think that's one tradition that Nihonjins, as you say, this loyalty, that really is unique --

MATSUMOTO: I think that is so important.

KOBAYASHI: It is unique about that all the ethnic backgrounds of this world and --

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. And our people are forgetting that, and it's a shame. I feel bad about it, but what can I do? You know -- at this point.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. Now, a couple of other things. Did your experience, during the war affect you at all?

MATSUMOTO: I don't think so.

KOBAYASHI: Do you, do you bear any animosity against being put into camp?

MATSUMOTO: Uh -- in one sense of the word, yes. You know, because that's like a prison, you know. I mean, it was a --

KOBAYASHI: It was a prison.

MATSUMOTO: -- a prison, yeah.

KOBAYASHI: And also, didn't it affect you as far as your livelihood, your --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yes. Definitely.

KOBAYASHI: It probably set you back several years --

MATSUMOTO: Oh, I would say it set me back ten years.

KOBAYASHI: Now, what about this redress and reparations? Do you think that Japanese-Americans should have received this?

MATSUMOTO: Sure.

KOBAYASHI: Obviously, that was not enough to compensate the long time that --

MATSUMOTO: No. But I think we deserved that much, anyway. Really, as I look around Sacramento, I know they picked up a lot of guys who were dallying around, and boom! Twenty thousand. You say it in one breath, and it doesn't sound like a hell

of a lot of money, but it is a lot of money, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO: Tax free and all that.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. Now, what about the future for -- do you have any grandchildren?

MATSUMOTO: Oh, yeah! Great-grandchildren!

KOBAYASHI: What do you think of the future for like, your great grandchild?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I tell you. I've tried, like my grandson, I've had breakfast with him for like eight or nine years. We go every Saturday and we go eat, except when he's out of town or I'm out of town.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. This is your grandchild.

MATSUMOTO: Grandson.

KOBAYASHI: Grandson. And what does he do?

MATSUMOTO: He works for what-you-call-it, Franchise Tax.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, so he has a good job.

KOBAYASHI: And you have breakfast with him?

MATSUMOTO: Yes. And at my breakfast time with him, I'm trying to tell him a few of the things I think he should know, you know, in life.

KOBAYASHI: And some of this involves your Japanese background?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, right.

KOBAYASHI: Now how old is your great grandchild?

MATSUMOTO: Eight months.

KOBAYASHI: Oh! He's just eight months old.

MATSUMOTO: She is.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, she is. What do you think the future holds for her? Is she Japanese American?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Okay. What do you think the future holds for her as a Japanese American?

MATSUMOTO: Well, that's what I'm interested in. Because I won't be around when, you know --

KOBAYASHI: Because she's so young.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah. But I always tell my grandson the Japanese culture, although it might seem kind of out of date and things like that, the main things are still there and they will be when you guys grow up.

KOBAYASHI: Does your grandson's wife join you for breakfast took, or --

MATSUMOTO: No, she doesn't join us.

KOBAYASHI: Why is that?

MATSUMOTO: I don't know.

KOBAYASHI: She just doesn't want to come?

MATSUMOTO: She doesn't want to get up! (Laughter.)

KOBAYASHI: Okay, well, finally since we're just about at the end, is there anything else that you would like to say?

MATSUMOTO: Well --

KOBAYASHI: Is there anything that we haven't covered about your life that you think you'd like to tell us?

MATSUMOTO: Well --

KOBAYASHI: Let me just stop (the tape) a minute. (Pause). What would you like to say at the conclusion then?

MATSUMOTO: Well, one of the fortunate things that I had in my own nature is that I like people. I'll do anything for anybody, you know. I don't care if they're black, white, or you name it. I'm willing to help, now that I'm able to, you know.

KOBAYASHI: But you've always helped people, though. I know you.

MATSUMOTO: Yeah, I helped. But I don't think I've done enough, you know, for what I've received. You know, I'm in comfort, in retirement, you know -- what the hell. If it wasn't for people helping

me, I would never be able to do this. And now I do as I please. And I try in every way to do what I can to help other people.

KOBAYASHI: Is there any advice you would give to younger people today, especially for Sanseis and Yonseis?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I always -- I am a firm believer in a few bucks for a rainy day, you know. And I know these young kids don't do that.

KOBAYASHI: What about culturally? Do you have any advice for them culturally?

MATSUMOTO: Well, I think that the Japanese culture is one of the best cultures that they should find. You know, they say good morning and good night and all that jazz. It doesn't seem like much, but it is.

KOBAYASHI: And, you know, one of the things, for example, that people are amazed at today is that, even for example, when a person dies you have this funeral, and maybe everybody doesn't know the deceased person's family that well, but they go and participate in Koden and help out. This kind of idea of helping each other out still seems to exist, and --

MATSUMOTO: That's right!

KOBAYASHI: -- and you understand it's still there, too.

MATSUMOTO: Right! I just had a recent death, you see. My nephew's wife passed away, and I happen to know he doesn't have too much money. This is a poor family, and I asked if I could be of any help, you know, financial or otherwise, you know. And he said, "I think I've got enough."

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see.

MATSUMOTO: But my nephew, he's pretty good. He's frank to me, you know. If he's broke, he tells me he's broke, you know.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, it's his wife that died?

MATSUMOTO: Yeah.

KOBAYASHI: Oh, I see. Alright, one last word -- anything else you'd like to say, Bill?

MATSUMOTO: No.

KOBAYASHI: Okay.

MATSUMOTO: I've led a good life -- that's all I can say.

KOBAYASHI: Well, thank you Bill! This has been a very, very interesting two days, and I appreciate your cooperation. Thank you!

[End Tape 2, Side 2]

[End of interview.]

(WMM:CCK/ldp)

a:history.wmm

TABLE OF CHILDREN, SPOUSES AND GRANDCHILDREN

(Wife) **May Kumasaki Matsumoto, deceased**

(1) **Patti Matsumoto Nishite**

(S, former) Gary Nishite

(G) Craig Nishite

(S) Kelly Nishite

(GG) Kelsey Nishite

(2) **Carole Matsumoto**

** (S) - Spouse
(G) - Grandchild
(GG) - Great-Grandchild